

The Happy, Happy Beggar

JOHN HERSEY



"A Profile"

Reprinted by permission.

Copr. 1946, The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

ADVENT PAPER NO. 11

*Published by the Editorial Board Advent Papers,
Church of the Advent, 135 Mount Vernon Street,*

Boston 8, Mass.
THE LIBRARY

**THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE
CATHEDRAL HEIGHTS
NEW YORK 25, N. Y.**

The Reverend Walter P. Morse, S.S.J.E., left China in the year 1949 and spent the next two and one half years in India near the Tibetan border, ministering to the very poor Tibetans there. He was recalled to the Mother House of the Society of St. John the Evangelist in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1952 for a year of rest and study. Father Morse left for the Far East in May 1953, and is now working among the Chinese on the Island of Formosa.

"A Profile"

Reprinted by permission.

Copr. 1946, The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

Additional copies may be obtained from

THE ADVENT PAPERS

135 MOUNT VERNON STREET

BOSTON 8, MASSACHUSETTS

The Happy, Happy Beggar

JOHN HERSEY

THE first time I saw Father Walter P. Morse, he was walking up the path of his mission compound in the town of Ichang, reading my calling card over and over, out loud. I had gone there to talk with him, and his gateman had run out into the streets to find him. He made quite a sight as he came swinging up the path. He is of medium height, and his natural roundness of figure was reinforced, I suppose, by a number of layers of clothing, for the late afternoon was chilly. The outermost layer of his outfit was a humble black cotton Chinese coolie gown. A white woollen skullcap rode the top of his head with a jauntiness that was as much in contrast to his coolie coat in mood as the cap was in color. His beard was at least nine inches long, full, virile, cut off square, and all glossy from washings and combings which, I later decided, were the business of a fastidious, rather than a vain, man. He had a mustache, too, which was evenly clipped to within a quarter of an inch of his upper lip. He was reading my card through horn-rimmed glasses balanced on the end of his nose. As he came closer and looked up, I saw a face of benignity, gentleness, humor, and calmness, with round cheeks, a large nose, and tremendous blue eyes; a face

flushed a bit by his haste and, in any case, somewhat reddened by a life spent mostly in the open air. "Hello! Hello!" he said, as if we were old friends long parted, though in fact he had never seen me before. I had just arrived, for a longish stay, in Ichang—which is at the dead center of China, near the mouth of the Yangtze Gorges, the point of extreme penetration of Japanese forces during the war—and I had inquired of a few people whether there were any foreigners in town. I had been told, then, about Father Walter, whom everyone seemed to know, and I had been directed to the Episcopal Mission compound. "Come in to my place," he said. "I'm sorry it's such a poor hovel." And he read the card out loud again. "Well, well, well," he said. "It's nice to have a visitor."

He turned off the main path, which led up to some pretentious-looking buildings at the top of the compound hill, onto a side path. At the junction, there was a sign, neatly lettered in Chinese and English. The English legend said, "To Father Walter P. Morse's Residence." The building thus indicated, though not a hovel, was only a tiny house. Long ago it had been painted white. Beside the path were a number of bamboo trees. The front door was locked, so Father Walter led me around to the back door. On the way we passed a very short and very cheerful-looking Chinese workman. Seeing me, he said to Father Walter, in Chinese, "A guest!" Father Walter answered, "A guest!" We went inside, through a tiny back hallway—evidently used as a combination entrance,

washroom, laundry, kitchen, pantry, and storeroom—to the room which served as Father Walter's living and sleeping quarters. This contained a round table, a straight-backed davenport, a couple of chairs, a charcoal brazier, two small end tables, an old upright piano, an iron bedstead, a small piece of furniture that had apparently been a child's dressing table and that now had a few books on it, and a square table, against one wall, for a desk. Over the piano there were two pictures of Christ and one of the Virgin Mary. On the wall above the desk a large square of Chinese reed matting had been hung, and to the matting were pinned, in pyramidal symmetry, a Chinese calendar, a photograph of the Boston Common, and pictures of pheasants, quail, thrushes, and wrens cut from magazines and pasted on squares of corrugated cardboard. There was a crucifix on the desk. The room looked very plain and yet it had an air of comfort and warmth. "Well, well, well," Father Walter said. He motioned me to the davenport and sat in one of the chairs. As he settled himself, he lifted his beard away from his chest, then patted it down again. "Tell me about yourself," he said. Then, quickly, he added, "I'm sorry I have nothing to set before you."

We talked about one thing and another, and gradually, diffidently, he told me about his work. He had a way of rolling his eyes up and half-closing them in mid-sentence, so that only slits of white showed at moments of emphasis or punctuation. Dusk fell as we talked, and Father Walter lit a

candle. In the dim light his bearded face was deep-lined, broad, and powerful—too round for an El Greco, too saintly-strong for a Hogarth, but somewhere between the two. He talked of the Chinese, of the war, of mankind. From the very first, I had the impression that he was a man of extraordinary tranquility. As I came to know him better, that evening and later on, I was obliged to decide that although he was a strange man in some respects, he was the happiest adult I had ever known. I thought, too, he realized how lucky he was. Once he said, after a long silence and apropos of nothing that had preceded, almost as if talking to himself, "Oh, yes, I'm a happy, happy man." I have wondered many times since I left Ichang about the basis of Father Walter's happiness; I have gone back over what I know about him, and I'm still not sure what his secret is.

Walter Morse was born fifty-four years ago in Milwaukee. His father was a coal dealer, a prosperous and worldly man. His mother was a strong, active, religious woman, and for her Walter developed an attachment which has evidently affected his whole life. "Mother was church," he told me once. "She and I went to services together. My father wasn't much of anything in a religious way; he wasn't baptized until just before he died." Mrs. Morse was a generator of good works, and she had the energy always to be "keeping something going." From her example, Walter got his compulsion to help others. His father had ambitions for him which did not suit him, but he tried hard to grow up

in his father's likeness, because that was what his mother seemed to want. He attended high school in Milwaukee and was graduated from Racine College, in Racine, Wisconsin. He worked for three miserable years in a bank in Milwaukee. Then, for the first time, he broke away from home; he went to New York and took a job in a brokerage firm, Orvis Brothers. He began by running the stock board in the customers' room and later became a clerk. Far from getting a few pegs up on a fortune, he just managed to scrimp along. "I learned poverty in Wall Street," he told me. The first year he earned five dollars a week, the second he earned six. All through his time on the edge of the moneypots of lower and the fleshpots of upper Manhattan, he remained a devout, abstemious, rigid young man.

In 1917, when he was twenty-five, he decided to become a religious. He underwent, he says, no emotional crisis that led him to take monastic orders, unless, perhaps, it was the separation from his mother. "It was just like an amateur becoming a professional," he says. He made up his mind to be a Cowley Father—a member, that is, of the Society of Mission Priests of St. John the Evangelist. The order, which is devoted to missionary work, was founded under the Church of England in 1865, in a suburb of Oxford called Cowley. An Episcopal branch of the Society was formed in the United States seventy-three years ago, with headquarters in Boston. Cowley Fathers are rare: there are only twenty-five in America and only about a hundred

the world over. Joining the order was quite a step for a man of twenty-five, for he was obliged to take irrevocable vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. This meant that he could never again call anything his own except the clothes on his back, that he could never indulge in venery, and that for the rest of his life he must adhere to the laws of the Society and the precepts of the Bible. There is no such thing as resigning from the Society of St. John the Evangelist: once a Cowley Father, always one, until death. Walter's parents were not especially upset when he announced his intention of taking orders; his father, he says, "had always been afraid I would go that way." The Society requires a novitiate period and does not accept members as full Fathers until they have reached their thirtieth year. When the United States entered the first World War, Walter was given leave of absence from the Society and for a year he served in the Army. He was a noncombatant and did not go overseas. After the war he attended Nashotah Seminary, near Milwaukee, and when he was thirty he became a Father.

Soon afterward, Father Walter was sent to his first missionary post, which was in Korea. He spent ten years there. "I thrive on solitude," he told me one Sunday afternoon when I asked if he wasn't lonely in Ichang. "In Korea there were times when I was by myself for days and there were stretches when I didn't hear a voice speak English for six months on end." In Korea, Father Walter learned to read and talk Chinese. Then he spent five years

in Japan. In 1937, when the war in China began, he went to Shanghai to help organize shelter, food, and protection for Chinese who had been made homeless by the fighting there. Refugee aid got fairly well organized in Shanghai, so, when the Japs showed signs of starting a drive inland, Father Walter made his way out through their lines and went by boat up the Yangtze ahead of the invaders to the city of Wuhu, about two hundred and fifty miles from Shanghai. He stayed there while the Japanese stormed the city, and then he rounded up as many as he could of the homeless and provided relief for them. Then he broke through the Japanese lines again and moved upriver to Hankow, where once more he received the Japanese and succored the population.

When, later, he slipped out of Hankow, he found that travelling farther inland by boat on the Yangtze was impossible, so, with a timorous Chinese guide, he started to walk a hundred and twenty-five miles overland to the cotton center of Shasi. All the way, the Chinese guide warned Father Walter of perils ahead, but such a jolly apparition as Father Walter seemed to soften the hearts of the Chinese thieves and murderers who were roaming the panic-stricken countryside. At a ferry station on a lake, the guide learned that frequently travellers using the ferry were robbed and killed; he refused at first to go aboard the ferry. But Father Walter calmed him, and the pair crossed the water unmolested. As they got near Shasi, they approached a town notorious for its bandits. The

guide again protested, but Father Walter, magnificent in his beard, ambled into town and the bandits received him as an honored guest. "Do you want to look at my things?" Father Walter asked the head bandit. "I have some very nice things." He had, as a matter of fact, only a bundle of clothes, a little cutlery, some toilet articles, and a watch and a pen. He had no money; people gave him food along the way. "Oh, we wouldn't touch *your* things," the head bandit said. The next day the bandits sent Father Walter and the quaking guide on their way, on horseback. "You'd never find people so helpful in Korea or Japan," Father Walter told me.

Father Walter went by boat from Shasi to Ichang, and there he settled down in the Episcopal Mission compound to wait for the Japanese. The Episcopal Mission was in the strong and worthy hands of another American, a Deaconess Riebe. Father Walter instructed her in all the tricks of handling relief work during the investment of a city, for by now he was a veteran. In this instance, as it turned out, he had plenty of time to prepare; it took the Japanese nearly a year to get into Ichang. In the interval, Father Walter and Deaconess Riebe laid in a big stock of rice. Finally, the Japanese attacked. The assault lasted five days, during which the city was reduced from a Yangtze trans-shipment port of a hundred and ten thousand people to a burned-out collection of shattered houses and a population of no more than fifteen thousand, five thousand of whom sought asylum in the five-

acre Episcopal Mission compound. It was summer, and they slept on the ground. Father Walter and Deaconess Riebe cooked for them and fed them. In the compound, there was, fortunately, an excellent well that supplied enough water for all. And after the battle was over, the Chinese were able to sneak out of the compound and pick up odds and ends of food and pieces of matting to build some sort of shelter.

Father Walter and Deaconess Riebe entertained their five thousand guests for the next two years. For all of that time, one of the pair was always on duty at the gate of the compound. As Father Walter stood guard, he read Dickens; he had found a complete set in the Custom House library, and he read every word of it at least once. Whenever Japanese soldiers tried to come through the gate, he rebuked them with dignity and just the right amount of heat. They always went away. Sometimes, though, they would climb the wall at some distance from the gate. Father Walter, who despite his girth was in excellent physical shape, always ran down the trespassers, took them by the collar, and persuaded them, with Christian firmness and in their own language, which he had learned during his stay in their fatherland, to climb out of the compound right where they had come over the wall. The day after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese rounded up all the other foreigners in town—about thirty of them, mostly British working for trading firms, and Belgian and French Catholic missionaries—and interned them on the grounds

of an old Lutheran mission in town. Father Walter and Deaconess Riebe, however, told the Japanese commandant that they intended to stay on in their compound to take care of the refugees. The commandant acquiesced.

Five months later, the Japanese said that an exchange of Japanese and American civilian prisoners was being arranged and that they were prepared to send Father Walter and Deaconess Riebe out of China; leaving was "voluntary." Father Walter and Deaconess Riebe thanked the Japanese but said they thought they'd stay on in Ichang, where they were needed. A few days afterward, the Japanese came back and said that the exchange was now a "military measure" and that the two were to prepare at once to go down the river and get aboard the Gripsholm, the repatriation ship. Father Walter hated to go, but in a way the order to depart was a relief. Life had developed a sameness; he was getting well into his second round of the complete works of Dickens.

Father Walter left Ichang in May, 1942. He had then spent, altogether nearly five years in China doing refugee relief work. He had come to like the Chinese better than any other people he had ever known, better even than his own. A poor man, he had lived at close quarters with poor Chinese, and he had learned what the Chinese needed most. It was medical care. War was, he knew, ephemeral. Disease was most certainly not. In his five years in China, he had seen thousands of horrible tropical ulcers (the kind that is so common in China, years

old, inches in diameter, so deep that bone shows at the core), he had seen the sores of scabies and syphilis, scalps whitened with fungus infections, noses and cheeks half eaten with leprosy. In the compound at Ichang, he had felt foreheads scorched by typhoid, typhus, cholera, dysentery, diphtheria, malaria, smallpox, scarlet fever, undulant fever, pneumonia, and fevers for which he did not even know the names. On the way home on the Gripsholm, Father Walter, now fifty years old, conceived a noble and rather fantastic idea.

Upon arriving in the States, Father Walter went to Boston. For a few months, dressed in the cassock of his order, he lectured before women's clubs, library associations, town meetings, and school assemblies. Each group paid him a small fee. He hoarded this money. This thriftiness was compatible with his vow of poverty because the money, in his eyes, did not belong to him. He was delighted with America. He thought that the war had made most Americans better people. "It always used to be very hard going around looking so strange," he said to me one day. "But during the war the whole attitude was changed. It was actually pleasant. People really tried to be nice." When he had saved more than a thousand dollars, he asked his acquaintances what they thought was the best hospital in Boston. They recommended the Massachusetts General. Like most hospitals during the war, it was desperately short of help and was issuing appeals for volunteers. He went around and offered his services as an orderly. Father Walter

did not particularly like the atmosphere at the hospital. "That's just about the snootiest place, I should think, in the country," he remarked. The personnel interviewer who talked to him said, "We'll let you know." Some time later the hospital sent word, in a roundabout way, that it was terribly sorry but Father Walter's appearance—the beard and cassock—was "too uncouth." He went to the Boston City Hospital, a predominantly Irish Roman Catholic institution, and there he found the people more to his liking. He talked a while with a nurse in the Voluntary Employment Bureau. She took him to Dr. James W. Manary, the head of the whole hospital. Dr. Manary laughed about the Massachusetts General. Then Father Walter told Dr. Manary what he wanted to do. He said he would like to be an orderly, so that in time he could learn all there was to know about every ailment that a layman could relieve without doing a patient any injury. Then he would return to China and heal whomever he could among the poor. Dr. Manary said that he would not think of letting Father Walter waste his time as an orderly. Father Walter would be given the freedom of the hospital to study. Dr. Manary told him to drop in any day and every day, visit any department he wished, ask any doctor any question he wanted, use any book he needed, and learn whatever else he could by acting as an assistant to a nurse. For six months, Father Walter went to Boston City Hospital every day except Sunday. He learned a lot.

In the summer of 1943, the State Department

announced that a few missionaries would be allowed to enter Free China. Father Walter asked permission to go and hurried to New York to equip himself. First, he studied the catalogues of all the big drug concerns in the city to find out which specialized in what medicines. Then he began calling at their offices. He would simply go in cold, present himself to the receptionist, tell her what he was after, and ask to see the president of the company. In most cases the receptionist, out of either amazement or sympathy, called the president and Father Walter was ushered in. "After the presidents took one look at me," he told me, "I didn't have to do much explaining. I look so strange they knew something was in the wind. I would just say, 'I'm going out to China to heal people. I want some of those nice medicines of yours. I want you to give them to me free.' " Almost all the presidents—or vice-presidents, in some cases—came through handsomely. He went to Lederle, Winthrop, Squibb Upjohn, Lilly, Merck, American Pharmaceutical, Parke, Davis, and Schieffelin, and if a company did not give him what he asked for outright, it gave him part and sold him the rest at wholesale prices. He continued until he had used up his thousand dollars. Lederle and Winthrop were especially generous. Dr. F. J. Stockman, a vice-president of Winthrop, slipped Father Walter a five-dollar bill at the end of their interview. "I was so touched," Father Walter recalled. "He was the nicest person." At American Pharmaceutical, Benjamin J. Wallach, the advertising manager, said to him,

"You just relax, Mister. You let us make up a little list of things we think you'll need in China, and we'll send the stuff around to you." "And they did," Father Walter said. "They sent me aspirin, cascara, bicarbonate of soda, zinc oxide, borac-acid ointment—a great big five-pound jar of it—oh, all sorts of nice things, just the kind of things I would have overlooked."

Father Walter is quite proud, in a not sinful way, of getting these big, impersonal firms to give him what he needed. "After all, you know," he says, "I'm a professional beggar." He did his soliciting absolutely on his own. The Episcopal hierarchy seemed, in fact, to feel that Father Walter's endeavors were a bit embarrassing and low-toned. One clergyman intimated to him that if he must go begging, it would be more dignified to ask for money and buy medicine with it "in the normal way." "Some persons," Father Walter remarked to me, "have a motto: 'Let's be respectable or die.' I'd rather die."

Before he knew it, Father Walter had in his first-aid kit fifteen hundred pounds of drugs, powders, plasters, bandages, instruments, pills, potions, and salves. His next job—and a hard one—was getting them and himself out to the heart of China, free. He wheedled passage and a seventy-five-pound baggage allowance on a British freighter, the *Diomed*, a Blue Funnel ship, Captain Hey master, which was sailing soon for Bombay. Father Walter took a chance on the British skipper's generosity and showed up at the dock with a truck carrying

all fifteen hundred pounds of his medicines. Sure enough, Captain Hey took it aboard. The ship sailed on September 15th. In mid-Atlantic, the Diomed received a wireless to change its route and go to Durban, in the Union of South Africa. There the ship began to unload. Captain Hey said to Father Walter, "I've no guarantee, but I think that if you stand by for a few weeks, we'll be going on to Bombay, and I'd be glad to ship you and your medicaments." There was no alternative, so Father Walter stood by. But he did not waste his time. He began to practice his profession of begging in Durban. The drug houses there responded most generously. They gave him an assortment of things that it had been almost impossible to get in the States—such as mercurochrome, and gentian violet, acriflavine (for skin diseases), and other aniline-dye drugs—and a treated elastic adhesive tape called Elastoplast, which proved to be one of the most valuable things in the whole collection. The firms in Durban gave him, in all, five hundred pounds of material. The ship began at last to load for Bombay, and Father Walter said to Captain Hey, "Now I have a ton of things. May I bring all that aboard?" "All you want," said Captain Hey. During the Diomed's layover in Durban, the local customs officials stored Father Walter's packages without making the usual charges. Furthermore, when the time came to put them back aboard, the chief customs inspector pitched in and helped Father Walter mark and repack his goods in such

a way that nothing would break and he would know which package each thing was in.

The ship got to Bombay. "In India," Father Walter told me, "I met the same courtesy I had met in the United States and South Africa." There he encountered a Parsee named Captain N. J. Vazifdar, a representative of the Indian Red Cross. Father Walter explained his problem to Captain Vazifdar: he wanted now to get to Calcutta free, with his ton of "hand baggage." Captain Vazifdar said that he could give Father Walter a pass on the railroad and would do so; as for baggage charges, the Indian Red Cross office in Calcutta would gladly pay them if he could get the railroad company to carry the medicines there on credit. Father Walter talked the railroad into accepting this rather tenuous arrangement and got to Calcutta. There he was very much surprised when the Indian Red Cross said that Captain Vazifdar must have been suffering from heatstroke; the Indian Red Cross certainly could not transport the impedimenta of unauthorized persons all over the place. In great distress, Father Walter wrote Captain Vazifdar a letter and sat down to wait. Six weeks later he received from his Parsee friend his own check for two hundred and thirty rupees, and the railroad was paid off.

Now came the hardest part of all—getting from Calcutta over the Hump. For the next six weeks, Father Walter trudged to office after office collecting rebuffs. He began with the United States Army, and although he had pleasant conversations with scores of enlisted men, and occasionally was hos-

pitably received by a lieutenant or a captain, he never succeeded in penetrating the Army's defense-in-depth. "I wasn't allowed to see the General," he told me. "I still wonder, sometimes, what sort of a person I would have found him. Probably a very kind man. But busy." Next he tried the Chinese Army, with no greater success. "What was going on then," Father Walter said, unconsciously lowering his voice, "was this great squeeze of contraband flying over the Hump. No one could make any profit out of carrying my poor pills." At the American Red Cross, someone finally made a helpful suggestion: Father Walter should go to see a Mr. Hsu, of the Chinese National Health Administration. He managed to talk with Mr. Hsu and a representative of the Chinese National Aviation Corporation, which was flying planes over the Hump. They said they would be glad to see that he and the medicines got to Kunming. Then Father Walter broke the first rule for a wartime traveller: never get separated from your gear. He flew to Kunming, and there he got a letter from Mr. Hsu. The deal was off; permission, it seemed, had not been granted to transport the medicines; extremely sorry. This cost Father Walter eight months of nightmare. He was, to begin with, far from his precious hoard. Next, he received a letter from the Calcutta customs saying that the ton of parcels was piling up a very handsome demurrage charge. He did not dare to try to go back to Calcutta, for fear he would never get into China again. He started writing letters himself—to soldiers and civilians in both

Chungking and Calcutta—and every day he paid influential people of Kunming a few fruitless calls. At last he met a major in the Army Air Forces who said that if he could get his stuff to Dibrugarh, in Assam, the Army would take it over the top. Father Walter wrote Mr. Hsu, who, evidently feeling that he was about to lose face, at once popped the ton over the Hump to Kunming and even persuaded the Calcutta customs to forget the storage charges. When the packages arrived at Kunming, not a bottle had been broken, not a pill had been lost. "That," Father Walter remarked, "says a lot for India and China."

It was now October, 1944. Father Walter had been on the road from New York for more than a year. He was in China, but he was still a long way from Ichang. The Japanese were mounting what appeared to be a heavy attack against southwest China and the American Army was preparing for the evacuation of its forces from the threatened area. "I'd been hoicked up out of China once by the Japs," Father Walter told me, "but I'd come so far this time that I couldn't turn back." Once his luck with the American Army changed, it stayed good. A word to an Army chaplain named McNamara, in Kunming, brought a whole detachment of G.I.s to see Father Walter. They packed his parcels into crates, put them on a truck, drove them all the way to Chungking, and stored them in a dry room at the Army hospital there. Father Walter himself rode another truck to Kweiyang. The Japanese drive on that city was at that moment

collapsing, just thirty miles away. If he had had his drugs, Father Walter thinks he might have stayed in Kweiyang, because he saw "a great need" there. The situation being what it was, he went on by truck to Chungking.

To get free passage downriver, toward Ichang, required three more weeks of supplication. "See a different person, try another channel—my, it was wearing!" he recalled. He finally talked the Ming Sen Company, operators of river steamers, into carrying him as far as Patung, fifty miles up along the Gorges from the Japanese front lines, which were still at Ichang. Patung was an advanced Chinese Army supply base, and in the nine months he had to wait there he practiced with his medicines on the Chinese soldiers. As soon as the war ended and traffic began to run all the way down the river, he begged, and was given, transportation to Ichang for himself and baggage.

Father Walter got back to Ichang in September, 1945, just two years after he had left New York. When he reached the city, the grass was growing tall in Second Horse Street, which before the war had been the main shopping avenue. Only four or five thousand of the inhabitants had returned to town from the mountains and from upriver. Among them there were many with the sores and fevers Father Walter wanted to attend to. He went right to work. Since then the population of the city, both healthy and halt, has steadily swelled, and few hours of his life have been idle.

He wakes up now, literally by cock crow, at

about four-thirty in the morning. He has each day a certain number of devotions to get through, including a reading of Mass. These he does early, and afterward he sterilizes his instruments, breaks out new bandages, and fills his medicine kit with what he thinks he will need that day. At eight o'clock he walks to his home-made clinic—the bombed-out, roofless anteroom of what was once a mission house in the town. He tucks a clean white apron under his beard and sits down on a wooden stool in the open air, walled in by white-washed ruins, with a couple of piles of bricks as seats for waiting patients to whom standing is painful, and with his medicine kit, a large tin Gold Flake cigarette container holding what he affectionately calls “my various condiments” open beside him on a table made of rubble.

The patients come in by the dozen off the street, through a beautiful white arch that supports nothing. Father Walter didn't have to hang out a shingle; the news of his work spread quickly through the town. An old water carrier whom he cured of an ulcer has appointed himself his assistant (at a moderate salary), and he crouches beside the Gold Flake box, handing Father Walter bandages and instruments and boiled water or whatever he asks for. The Chinese idea of entertainment is not always ours; the patients crowd around Father Walter and watch with earthy delight as he cleans out a monstrous purple-and-green ulcer on a coolie's leg and covers it with Elastoplast, or probes a deep infection in a small boy's thigh and stuffs it

with sulfa powder, or puts copper sulphate under the eye, or smears the sores of a boatman's lids or an old woman's trachomatous scabies with sulphur ointment (which, because of the incidence of the disease, is called, in Chinese, the "universal medicine"). There is no horror in these sights for them; there is only pleasure in watching Father Walter's gentle work and listening to his quaint remarks. His Chinese is the literary language that he learned in Korea, a tongue quite unlike the vernacular. "It is like talking on a different plane," Father Walter says, "as if you used nothing but Platonic ideas." The faces of the waiting patients are fascinating to watch: they are full of the primitive awe of aborigines in the presence of a tribal witch doctor, but, unlike aborigines, they do not fear the medicine man; obviously, they love him. They laugh with him and they believe in him enough so that their belief, as well as his unguents and powders, repairs them. Perhaps in those faces is the clue to Father Walter's secret. There is no doubt that he finds a lot of satisfaction in the work. "Some of the cures have been really remarkable," he told me. He does not mix religion with his healing. "People were too shaken up by the war to bother their heads with doctrine," he says. Yet his example unquestionably serves as a kind of preachment.

His "customers," as he calls the patients, are all indigent. Once in a while a man in a fur-lined gown and a round silk hat comes to him, but Father Walter will not treat people of that type. "You can buy your medicines on the street," he tells them.

"My things are only for the very poor." Those who have cash can, as a matter of fact, buy their stuff right across the street, because an opportunistic Chinese merchant, seeing the crowds that Father Walter drew to his clinic in the gateway, set up, directly opposite, an establishment called the Great Asiatic Drug Company. "I hear that they do a very poor business," Father Walter told me with satisfaction. He finds the drugstore a convenience, however. Occasionally he barter with the proprietor—when he needed some ichthyol ointment, he swapped some atabrin for a jar of it—and he takes his syphilitic cases there for neoarsphenamine treatments, which he does not feel qualified to administer and for which he pays with sulfathiazole.

Father Walter has time to treat about sixty patients a day. If he had more time, more patients would come; the customers seem to regulate their attendance in accordance with his capacity to handle them. "The Chinese especially like a quack," he says. "People come to me who wouldn't think of going to a hospital." An Army doctor in Chungking told him that he had a better supply of drugs than any civilian hospital in China, so there may be some soundness in their instinct.

At about one o'clock, Father Walter leaves his gateway clinic and goes on foot to visit patients who are too sick to come to him. Among these are cases of typhoid, typhus, dysentery, malaria, cholera, and meningitis. He has cured many people of meningitis, which had always been a notorious kill-

er around Ichang, by using sulfadiazine. Sometime around three, he gets home to his white cottage. After washing, he prepares and eats his only meal of the day. His diet is healthful but narrow—potatoes, carrots, beans, Chinese cabbage, and pork, in various stews and permutations, and fruits in their season. He never eats rice. Once in a while he buys himself some small cakes or sweets. He lives on six hundred Chinese dollars a day, currently thirty-five American cents. Out of the five hundred and forty gold dollars he receives each year from the Episcopal Mission Board, he pays all his expenses and the salaries of his gateman at the clinic and his factotum at the cottage. This man, whose name is Yang, is an old, thick-tongued farmer. "I've never understood a word he has said," Father Walter told me. Neither, of course, does Yang understand Father Walter's Platonic ideas. But they get along fine.

To judge by Father Walter's circumference, he subsists well enough on his fare. He welcomes deviations, however. Recently he had his first cup of coffee in a year. One evening I took him to a restaurant to give him some Chinese food, and as he ate he unconsciously uttered soft, monosyllable exclamations of delight. Another time I took him a half-dozen cans of C-rations and vegetable juice a friend had let me have. He at once arranged them in a row on his table and read the labels out loud: " 'Meat and vegetable stew,' hmm. . . . 'Meat and beans' aah. . . . Let me me—A refreshing and nourishing combination of vegetable juices from

eight kinds of selected garden-fresh vegetables, blended in proper proportions to develop a delicious, pleasing flavor'—oh, my goodness! . . ."

In what remains of daylight after his meal, Father Walter washes the apron he wears when he is at the clinic, boils water for the next day's session, and cleans his cottage. Then he reads for a while. His medical library consists of two books, and in these he browses now and then: "Manson's Tropical Diseases" and a United States Army manual of dermatology. As often as he can, he reads what he calls "shop." At present it is Volume II of Frederic W. Farrar's "Lives of the Fathers"—the biographies of Saints Augustine, Basil, Jerome, Chrysostom, and Gregory of Nyssa. When he tires of reading, he may play the piano. He is quite an expert. Mostly he plays Chopin études and the preludes and fugues from Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavichord." He has a tuning key with which he keeps the piano, lent him by the mission, in good pitch.

On pleasant evenings, he just sits in the window of his room and looks out. His yard is a peaceful sight, despite the fact, for which he apologizes to visitors, that "the backhouse is in the foreground." Not far from the cottage there is a garden framed by trees of many sorts—camphor, bamboo, peach, apricot, orange, oak, sycamore, acacia, and long-needed pine. Birds like the ones in the pictures over his desk come there, and sometimes parrots and many small birds whose feathers and songs are both brilliant. Monkeys play around the garden

once in a while. Watching them, Father Walter says, is much better than reading newspapers. "News I almost never get until it's two or three months old," he told me. "By that time it doesn't make any difference—things have either succeeded or failed."

On Sundays he sees only those customers who need him badly. At eight o'clock in the morning he reads Mass in Chinese, at the chapel in the mission compound, for the thirty-odd Christians who have returned to Ichang out of the three hundred who were there before the war. He has, to assist him, a male and a female catechist, both Chinese. The rest of Sunday he writes letters, reads shop, practices the piano, contemplates the garden, and sometimes takes inventory of his medicines. He has already used up about a quarter of his ton. He has never taken a pill himself. He gets lots of exercise simply by walking around, sleeps well (he goes to bed at eight every night), and enjoys excellent health. Even on the Sabbath, his bearing is not the least sanctimonious. Altogether, he scarcely lives up to the common concept of the missionary as a holier-than-thou prig. He has lost the rigidity of his younger days; he is mellow and easy now. He also gives an impression, despite his prim and careful speech, of an exceedingly solid virility.

Father Walter seems, in fact, to be a match for the entire Twenty-sixth Chinese Army, the headquarters of which is encamped in the mission compound. He is trying hard to get the Army out of the compound. "They're just naughty," he says

gently, and then thunders, "The *brigands!*" He has written several times to Chungking, and he has warned the soldiers that the Generalissimo and the American Embassy will someday take action against them. "But Chungking is so far away," he says sadly. "They don't seem to care. If these Twenty-sixth Army people had been as active five years ago as they are today in resisting *me*, the Japs would never have got this far." The soldiers have their own medical detachment in the compound, but whenever any of them gets sick, he goes to Father Walter. The other day, Father Walter went to the Army's prison stockade, which seems to be well populated all the time, and treated the sick through the barbed wire. No one stopped him.

Some of the soldiers have given him a bit of trouble. Not long after Father Walter returned to Ichang, one of them, claiming to be the commanding officer's representative, asked to inspect his supply of medicines, on the pretext that he had to make a report. Father Walter said, "That's personal property. That's more valuable to me than money. You wouldn't ask to see my money, would you?" The "representative," having lost face, retired. Later, some of the medicines disappeared. So did Father Walter's pen and watch. He knows who has the watch. He was treating the "representative" and another soldier in his room one day, and while he was busy with the second one, the watch, which was lying on his desk, disappeared. The "representative" gave himself away the next day, before Father Walter had even said anything, by

blurting out, "I hear you have lost your watch." A week later, Father Walter saw the soldier on the street. The soldier turned his head away and pretended not to see him. The next time they passed, Father Walter went up to him and said, "You weren't cured of your trouble. You'd better come back." This was the simple truth. The soldier came back for further treatment, and since then the two of them have become good friends. Father Walter has never asked for his watch. "That man knows that I know what he's done to me," he told me, "and he knows that I don't hold it against him."

The soldier often drops in on Father Walter. On a recent Sunday he paid a formal call with his wife and talked sadly of conditions in China. "All that you say may be true," Father Walter replied, "but I still say that the Chinese heart is good. However bad a Chinese man may be on the outside, his heart is good."

"I think so, too," the soldier said.

"Oh, yes, the Chinese has the heart of a child," Father Walter said. He looked the soldier in the eye. "He's willing to be forgiven. That's the last word in humility."

The soldier blinked and said, "If you understand that, you understand us Chinese. We can't afford to be honest; we're too poor."

The conversation turned to the damage the Japanese had done to the mission property. The soldier said, "Why don't you put in claims against the Japanese?"

"That's gone and past," Father Walter said.

"They didn't know what they were doing."

The soldier suddenly said, "If everyone in the world were like you, Father Walter, there would be no trouble anywhere."

Father Walter was very gay when he told me this story. He laughed off the soldier's tribute. "I don't know that that's true," he said. All the same, I think he has a sneaking feeling that it is.

—JOHN HERSEY

Advent Papers now ready

- No. 1. The Roots of Religion
by Gordon W. Allport
- No. 2. Out of Print
- No. 3. The Appeal of Anglican Catholicism to
An Average Man
- No. 4. What is The Anglican Communion?
by John Wild
- No. 5. Is Alcohol Troubling You?
by An Alcoholic
- No. 6. The Sacrament of Forgiveness
- No. 7. The Meaning of Priesthood
by Alan W. Watts
- No. 8. Toward Self-Discipline
by Granville M. Williams, Superior, S.S.J.E.
- *No. 9. Meditations for Every Day of the Month
by Archbishop Fénelon
- *No. 10. The Spirit of Orthodoxy
by H.R.H. Princess Ileana of Romania
- No. 11. The Happy, Happy Beggar
by John Hersey
- No. 12. "Miserable Offenders"
An Interpretation of Prayer Book Language
by C. S. Lewis

*Nos. 9 and 10 15¢ each; \$11.25 per 100. All others
10¢ each; \$7.50 per 100. Postage additional.

THE ADVENT PAPERS
135 MOUNT VERNON STREET
BOSTON 8, MASSACHUSETTS

EDITORIAL BOARD

Chairman

JOHN D. WILD, PH.D.
Professor of Philosophy
Harvard University

GORDON W. ALLPORT, PH.D.
Professor of Psychology
Harvard University

REV. PETER R. BLYNN
Church of the Advent

MISS INA MAY GREER, M.M.Sc.
Research Associate in Psychiatry
Massachusetts General Hospital

MISS MARJORIE GREGG, S.C.H.C.

REV. WHITNEY HALE, S.T.D.
Rector, Church of the Advent

RICHARDSON WRIGHT, LL.D.
Former Editor, *House & Garden*



MR. EZRA MERRILL, Business Manager

Address all Communications to
THE SECRETARY, ADVENT PAPERS
135 Mt. Vernon Street
Boston 8, Massachusetts